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HAWAIIAN RIDDLING

By MARTHA W. BECKWITH

MUCH in the psychology of the Polynesian has been shown to resemble closely that of the prehistoric civilizations which grouped about the Mediterranean. The taste for riddling is a minor but no less interesting example of this parallelism in mental habit and training, and the part played by the riddling contest in Hawaiian story is directly comparable with that which it plays in old European literary sources like the Scandinavian Edda or the Greek tale of Oedipus and the riddle of the Sphinx.¹ In some Hawaiian stories of the ancient past, the contest of wit is represented as one of the accomplishments of chiefs, taking its place with games of skill like arrow-throwing or checkers, with tests of strength like boxing or wrestling, and with the arts of war such as sling-stone and spear-throwing as a means of rivalry. It is played as a betting contest, upon the results of which contestants even stake their lives. There are definite rules of the game, a definite training preliminary to it, and the decisions, even in the case of an unpopular rival, seem to be judged openly and with impartial fairness. Such a wit-contest is called *hoopaapaa*, a word somewhat grandly translated by Andrews, Thrum, and others, as the "art of disputation." In its narrower sense, the expert in *hoopaapaa* depends upon the art of riddling. It is the object of this paper to describe this practice of riddling as it is

¹ For the Scandinavian riddling practice see Lay of Vafthrudnir (Vigfusson & Powell; Corpus Poeticum Boreale, I, 61), Lay of the Dwarf Alvis (I, 81), King Heidrick's Riddles (I, 86), perhaps also Lay of Grimnir (I, 69) and Loki's Altercation (I, 100). Compare also the riddling episode in the story of the Punjaub hero, Rasalu (Swynnerton, Romantic Tales from The Punjaub, 1903, pp. 250-254).

For the riddle of the Sphinx see Apollodorus, III, 8 (Loeb, I, 347).

An interesting discussion of European riddle forms is to be found in Mr. Rudolph Schevil's dissertation, "Some forms of the riddle question and the exercise of the wits, in popular fiction and formal literature," University of California Publications in Modern Philology, II (1911), 183-237.

represented in the modern folk-lore of Hawaii and in old Hawaiian tradition.

Although no Hawaiian riddles have, to my knowledge, ever been published, a very great number of both proverbs and riddles are current even today among the folk and differ in no respect from the metaphorical riddling or the word-play known all over the eastern continent, but so far unreported from American Indian tribes. The few specimens here set down were collected for me in Honolulu from a Hawaiian informant, Mrs. Mary Pukui, who belongs to an old Puna family, and translated by Miss Laura Green, whose thorough knowledge of the vernacular makes her an authority upon genuine Hawaiian matters.

1. *Ula o luna, ula o lalo, kau mai ka oli.*
Red above, red below, with a cheerful call.
ANS. Rooster.
2. *Ekolu pa a loa ka wai.*
Three walls and you reach water.
ANS. Coconut.
3. *Kuu punawai, kau i ka lewa.*
My spring suspended in air.
ANS. Coconut.
4. *Kuu hale, hookahi ô-ä, elua puka.*
My house has one beam and two doors.
ANS. Nose.
5. *Kuu ana ula, ku lalani na koa kapa keokeo.*
In my red cave stand in rows white-clad soldiers.
ANS. Teeth.
6. *Ewalu ô-ä, hookahi pou, paa kuu hale.*
Eight beams, one post, my house is complete.
ANS. Umbrella.
7. *Kuu kanaka au-wae lewa.*
My man of the swaying chin.
ANS. Taro-leaf.
8. *Kuu wahi ia,² ilalo ka poo, iluna ka hiu.*
Some fish of mine, head downward, tail upward.
ANS. Onion.
9. *Ke kanaka e holoholo ana iloko o ke uki.*
A man who runs in the tall grass.
ANS. Louse.
10. *Puaa ka lau o ka niu, mohola ka lau o ka naenae.*
Pyramidal like coconut leaves, then unfolding like the leaves of the *naenae* (a kind of shrub).
ANS. Squid.

² Or, *He i-a ka'u*, I have a fish.

11. *Luu a aea, luu a aea, a hiki i ka waikaloo.*
Dive and rise, dive and rise, and then draw out.
ANS. To sew.
12. *Elua iliili, puni ka honua.*
Two pebbles viewing the whole earth.
ANS. Eyes.
13. *Kuu lahui, umiumi loloo.*
My nation, a long-bearded race.
ANS. Goats.
14. *Umeke pakakā, poe pakakā, lihilihi ulaula, koko helelei wale.*
Shallow calabash, shallow cover, red fringe, broken calabash-net.
ANS. Earth, sky, rainbow, rain.
15. *Hele ka makua me ka kalakala, noho ke keiki me ka onaona.³*
The parent goes with his roughness, the child is left with his fragrance.
ANS. A garland of *hala* fruit.
16. *Kuu imu kalua loa.*
My oven that hides (its contents) forever.
ANS. The grave.
17. *He umeke no, he poi, he umeke no, he poi.*
A calabash and a cover, a calabash and a cover.
ANS. The jointed bamboo.
18. *Kuu ipu opaha, hau i ka pali.*
My misshapen melon hanging on a precipice.
ANS. Ear.
19. *Hookahi opihi koele, lau a lau na alinalina.*
One big dark *opihi* (a shell-fish) and thousands of yellow ones.
ANS. Moon and stars.
20. *Kuu waapa holo i na mokuaaina a pau.*
My boat which runs to all the islands.
ANS. Flat-iron.
21. *Kuu manu hookahi no iwi kaumaha.*
My bird with a single heavy bone.
ANS. *Kolea* tree, because *kolea* also means a bird, the plover.
22. *Ahihi, pu-iliili; kakahiaka, houhou; auakea, kau i ka lewa.*
In the evening, gathered; in the morning, pierced; in the forenoon, hung in the air.⁴
ANS. An *ilima lei* (a wreath of a certain kind of flower).
23. *Ai no, muku ana.*
Eating and grumbling.⁵
ANS. A water-gourd.

³ The hard upper part of the pandanus fruit (the parent) is cut off before stringing the remainder (which is softer and fragrant) into a garland.

⁴ The Hawaiians pluck the flowers the night before, string them in the early morning, and hang them up for sale or wear them about the neck.

⁵ As one drinks, the water gurgles.

24. *Kuu kanaka, ai ma ka hua, hoolepo i ke alo.*
My man, eating behind, voiding in front.⁶
ANS. An adz.
25. *Kuu imu, elua no pohaku moa.*
My oven has two stones for baking.
ANS. Two stones used for cracking pandanus nuts.
26. *Kuu waa, he umi ihu.*⁷
My double canoe has ten noses.
ANS. Feet, with ten toes.
27. *Kuu mau koi, nana e kalai na waa liilii ha waa kia loa.*
My hatchets carve out little canoes and long-masted canoes.⁸
ANS. Bare feet, large and small, going over a trail.
28. *Kuu wahi ia ili ole.*
My skinless fish.
ANS. Taro tops, often used, cooked as greens, in place of fish.
29. *He ua ka upena, he makani ke kapahu.*
The rain spreads the net, the wind drives it in.⁹
ANS. Candle-nut; it ripens after the rainy season and falls when the wind blows.
30. *Na ka ia make e hapai ka ia ola.*
The dead fish raises the live one.
ANS. The cowrie-shell used to catch squid.
31. *Pupuhilo i ka poo o ka o-o, lei haili oia manu; kuu manu la ewalu malama, i ka iwa la, lele.*
Gathered up like the tuft of feathers on the head of the o-o bird, proud adornment of that bird (?); my bird rests for eight months, on the ninth it flies.¹⁰
ANS. Cultivating a garden: clearing the ground, the owner's pride in his garden, the period of ripening, the eating of the fruit.

⁶ The Hawaiian plane bites into the wood, and leaves sawdust and shavings. Miss Green translates "littering in front," but I think this misses the point.

⁷ The fore-part of the canoe is called the "nose" (*ihu*).

⁸ The Hawaiians have observed that a bare-footed person forms a print in the shape of a hatchet.

⁹ Miss Green translates "cradles" and "scatters." According to Andrews's dictionary, the words used refer to net fishing, and this gives the proper figure.

¹⁰ Miss Green says, "The first part means pulling of weeds, gathering sticks and planting; the second is the owner's pride in his garden; the third part signifies the eight months taken for ripening, culminating by eating in the ninth." The first part of the translation seems to me obscure.

32. *Hala ka laau, make; pa ka laau, ola.*
Missing (the wood), it dies; piercing (the wood), it lives.¹¹
ANS. A torch of candle nuts.
33. *Kuu laau, huhu ke aa, ulu; kolo ke aa, make.*
My tree-trunk; when you pull its root, it grows; when you let it run, it dies.
ANS. An anchor.
34. *Kuu wahine, eha piko.*
My wife with four navels.¹²
ANS. A braided mat.
35. *Kuu ia, ai no, oni ana, ai no, oni ana.*
My fish, a taste and a wiggle, a taste and a wiggle.¹³
ANS. Baked candle-nut, used as a relish.
36. *Kuu ia, ai maloko kona unahi.*
My fish with its scales inside.
ANS. Red peppers, used as a relish.
37. *Kuu ia, nona ka honua.*
My fish possesses the earth.
ANS. *Honu*, turtle.
38. *Kuu ia, pa i ka lani!*¹⁴
My fish, it touches heaven.
ANS. *Palani* (a flat dark-brown fish emitting a disagreeable odor).
39. *Kuu ia, nona ka la.*¹⁵
My fish, possessor of the sun.
ANS. *Kohola* (whale).
40. *Kuu aho hilo loa.*¹⁶
My cord of long *Hilo*-grass.
ANS. Hilo district.

¹¹ Miss Green writes, "You may remember that the nuts are strung on thin, sharp strips of bamboo; unless it is constantly watched and the consuming nut *koe*-d or snuffed (?), the wood will burn out and the torch be extinguished, but if it is carefully manipulated, it catches the next nut and thus keeps burning."

¹² The mat-maker begins to braid at one corner. When the mat is completed one can not tell at which corner it was begun. Miss Green translates "with four corners."

¹³ Miss Green says that the word *ia* (flesh, commonly fish) in distinction from *ai* (vegetable food, commonly pounded *taro*-root) may also mean "relish." With this meaning it may include boiled greens, *luau*; or red peppers, *ni-oi*; or baked candle-nuts, *inamona*; or anything eaten with *poi*. If the question is asked, "*Heaha ko oukou ia?*" What is your meat? the answer may be any one of these, or even "*He paakai*," salt. The riddle describes the motion of the hand in taking a bit of the relish with the *poi*.

¹⁴ Miss Green suggests the rendering, "My fish! The stench reaches heaven!"

¹⁵ *Koho* means "to choose" or "possess"; *la* is the "sun."

¹⁶ This and the next six riddles are puns upon the names of the districts on the island of Hawaii.

41. *Kuu mau kupuna.*
My grandparents.
ANS. Puna district.
42. *Kuu lua u-u.*
My good red fish.
ANS. Ka-u district.
43. *Ka makani Kona.*
The south wind.
ANS. Kona district.
44. *Kuu lei hala.*
My pandanus wreath.
ANS. Kohala district.
45. *Kuu mau makua.*
My parents.
ANS. Hamakua district.
46. *Kuu hulu, kuu nae.*
My feather, my fish-net.
ANS. The fishes *pa-hulu* and *na-nae*.
47. *Palu aku au, hole mai oe.*
I lick and you scratch.
ANS. The fishes *upapalu* and *aholehole*.
48. *Piopio, kahakaha, lei a ka manu.*
Peeping(?), scratching, crown of the bird.
ANS. The place-names Wai-pio, Ke-kaha, Wai-manu.
49. *Kuu uahi ua, hele pu me ke kanaka.*¹⁷
My rain, accompanying man.
ANS. *Ua-ua-kaha*, stiff-necked or haughty.
50. *Luku ia ke alii, pio a ka manu.*
Blood of the chief, arch(?) of the bird.
ANS. The place-names Wai-luku, Hono-lii, Wai-pio, Wai-manu.

¹⁷ This and the next two plays on words are unsatisfactory in translation. Here the play is on the word *ua*. Of the next Miss Green says, "Only half of the answer is given; the other half is to be guessed." I take it that this means a riddling match. The first says, "*Luku ia ke alii*," and names two places near Hilo-Wailuku and Honolii. The man challenged answers with "*Pio a ka manu*," and names Waipio and Wai-manu, also near Hilo. Of the third Miss Green writes, "Quite untranslatable into English although I can see it in Hawaiian, being a double play on words. *Puna* is here mortar, or stone-coral coming from the sea (*kai*). The best I can do with it is to put it thus: When the house (*hale*) belongs to the mortar, it abides in the sea; when the house belongs to the sea, it abides in the mortar." Certainly this makes little sense in English. The reference is probably to the Hawaiian custom of considering sisters-in-law as wives and brothers-in-law as husbands in common.

51. *No ka puna ke hale, noho ia e ke kai; no ke kai ka hale, noho ia i ka puna.*

ANS. *Puna-lua* (plurality of husbands or wives) and *kai-koeke* (brothers- or sisters-in-law).

Fornander's collection of Hawaiian folk-tales recently published with text and translation by the Bishop Museum in Honolulu,¹⁸ is our chief source for knowledge of the treatment of the riddling contest in Hawaiian story. Turning to this collection, we find six tales in which such a contest is described in some detail. In two of them, the term *hoopaapaa* is expressly used to name the art. These six are:

1. *Lonoikamakahiki.* Vol. IV, 256-323.
2. *Pikoiaakaala.* Vol. IV, 450-463.
3. *Kipakailiuli.* Vol. IV, 510-517; Vol. V, 398-405.
4. *Kaipalaoa.* Vol. IV, 574-595.
5. *Kuapakaa.* Vol. V, 78-135.
6. *Kapunohu.* Vol. V, 418-421.

Of these, the story called *Kaipalaoa*, or "The *Hoopaapaa* Youngster," is by far the fullest and most important. It tells of a lad whose father's bones, together with those of many other contestants, lie bleaching before the enclosure of a famous chief of Kauai noted for his success in riddling. The lad practises the art of *hoopaapaa* and in a long riddling debate outdoes all the wits of Kauai and avenges his father's death.

It will, I think, be possible to show that this story is the source of a similar episode in the legend of *Kipakailiuli* in which the hero visits Kauai and outwits a champion boxer, wrestler, and riddler, in the arts by which the Kauai chief has terrorized the island. The situations are similar. In both cases a champion from the district of Puna, in Hawaii, worsts a cruel chief of Kauai who has long terrorized the island. But in the episodic story, the elaborate word-contest is replaced by a couple of trivial riddles such as might easily be substituted by one unfamiliar

¹⁸ Fornander: Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-lore, Memoirs of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum of Polynesian Ethnology and Natural History, vols. iv-vi, Honolulu, 1916-1919.

with the story in full, but wishing to use the incident to complete the record of the hero's adventures.¹⁹

The other four riddling episodes seem to be independent. In the story of *Lono*, this famous chief of Hawaii visits the powerful chief of Oahu on purpose to engage in a betting contest, called *hoopaapaa*, and in every encounter wins over his powerful antagonist. In *Pikoiakaala*, the demi-god of the Rat family bets against the champion rat-shooter of the royal family of Oahu, and wins through his skill in punning. In *Kuapakaa*, the son of a banished counsellor of the great chief of Hawaii wins in various betting contests with his father's detractors, until they are finally all put to death and his father reinstated in favor. An independent episode in the life of *Kapunohu* (whose legend is told in full in Vol. V, 214-225) relates how this hero is worsted at betting by the tricks of two young men whom he has formerly defeated.

Examining these stories in detail, we find that it is only in its narrower sense that the *hoopaapaa* contest is confined to matching riddles. Any test of superiority, it would seem from the contest, may be employed to place a rival at a disadvantage, especially a guest who comes as a stranger and sets up pretensions to equal rank with the established ruler of the district or island. In those stories in which the *hoopaapaa* contest is directly alluded to, the successful contestant is in this position of guest; and it seems to be legitimate by the rules of the game to take him at whatever disadvantage this isolation from his supporters involves. Unless he

¹⁹ The riddles, upon the answer to which the chief stakes his own life, are as follows:

Kai a puni, kai a lalo, koe koena.

Plaited all around, plaited to the bottom, leaving an opening.

O kanaka i ku,

O kanaka i moe,

O kanaka i pelupelu ia.

The men that stand,

The men that lie down,

The men that are folded.

The answer is in both cases "a house." In the first riddle, "the house is plaited all around from top to bottom (with thatch) leaving an opening, the door"; in the second, "the sticks (of the house) are made to stand, the battens are laid down, and the grass and cords are folded."

is in a position to defend himself, he must never challenge whatever insult his host sees fit to put upon him. If he does challenge it, stakes are set and he must prove his claim to skill equal to that of his host by whatever tests of superiority he thinks he can meet. He is, however, at liberty to decline any particular test in which he knows himself to be unskilled. It is only the rash boaster who will attempt more than he can perform; the true hero knows his own strength. If in the excitement of the game he undertakes something beyond it, he must employ his wits to help him out. Moreover, he does not necessarily depend upon his own strength or skill; he is at liberty to call upon a follower to speak or act for him. For this reason, high chiefs gathered about themselves those skilled in any competitive art, and men who wished to attain distinction sought notice at their courts by challenging the seasoned wits and seeking to displace them in their lord's estimation.

In a number of stories, definite allusion is made to training in the art of the *hoopaapaa*. In the story of Lono-who-came-from-Kahaki, the boy, visiting his father's treasure-house, discards as worthless the implements of sport and the wooden war-club "fit only to poke hot stones out of an oven"; but commends the war-spears, sling, and the images of the gods. He says, "That makes three things in your keeping that are of value; I will take care of these things!" and he becomes expert with spear and sling, as also in wrestling. On the circuit of the island, he sees an old man with gray hair reaching below the waist whom he at first takes for a god, but, learning he is merely a chief's counselor, "What is the old man good for?" he demands. The attendants reply: "The counselor is a very great man in the king's court. He must be a man skilful in language, and whatever advice he gives to the king, the king will give heed to. He can predict the coming of prosperity to the land and to the people. He can tell whether a man, commoner or chief, will become rich or poor." Consulting the old man as to his own future, Lono is advised to take up the art of *hoopaapaa*. He proves an apt pupil and on his return home entangles all his playmates in argument, to his own great practical advantage. Says the story, "This made the third

thing that Lono-from-the-land-of-Kahiki was proficient in up to his death, and he caused no end of trouble for certain chiefs thereby."

Other Hawaiian tales speak more in detail of the requirements of the training for the *hoopaapaa*. Kaipalaoa, called "the *hoopaapaa* youngster," goes for instruction to an aunt who lives in Kohala. "She taught him all she knew relating to the profession; the things above and the things below, in the uplands and in the lowlands; the things of day and the things of night; of death and life; of good and evil. She taught him all that she knew, where-upon he was classed as an expert." Kuapakaa, son of a banished chief's counsellor, gets his training from his father. The story runs: "After Kuapakaa had grown up to the age when he could talk and think, Pakaa said to him: 'I want to teach you the songs relating to your master and also the general knowledge of all things; for it is possible that he will miss me and will come in search of me; if he does, I want you to be ready to meet him.' The course of instruction did not take many days for Kuapakaa was a bright boy and mastered everything in a way to give him a thorough knowledge of the different branches of knowledge." It would appear, then, from these descriptions that education for the wit-contest demanded a thorough objective knowledge of the physical world, with the names, attributes, and history attached to individual objects and the classes to which they belonged, together with the genealogies of chiefs and the names of places and their local peculiarities throughout the group.

The importance of the thorough mastery of his art to the expert in *hoopaapaa* is shown by the high stakes for which the game is played, which proceed to such extravagant lengths that not only a whole landed possession but even life itself is made to depend upon the outcome. The loser is regularly "cooked in the oven,"²⁰ probably, since cannibalism was not practised in Hawaii,

²⁰ The Hawaiian oven or *imu* is prepared by digging a hole in the earth, filling it with stones and kindling a wood fire over it to heat the stones. When all are well heated, a layer of stones is left on the bottom and the rest thrown to the sides. When the oven is filled, these are used to cover the top, and earth is then thrown over the whole.

in order the more easily to remove the flesh from the bones, which are then set up in token of victory. In *Kuapakaa*, the rivals who are conspiring for the hero's death say, "There is always one wager, our bones. If we beat you, you forfeit your life to us, and if you beat us, why, we forfeit ours."²¹ In the story of Lono, although the two chiefs have staked only their landed estates, Lono says to the counsellor whose timely arrival has won him the bet, "If you had not come today, I should have been cooked in the oven already prepared for me."²² When "the *hoopaapaa* youngster" has beaten the Kauai chief's disputants, "The men were then all killed and cooked in the oven and their bones stripped of flesh."²³

The episodic account of the last contest is treated more elaborately in the story of *Kipakailiuli*. The king's crier proclaims the contest as follows: "All men are commanded to the chief's house to guess the chief's riddle. If solved, saved from the oven; if not solved, death in the oven. Not a man, woman or child, old or young, shall remain at home except the man who winks not when you stab at his eye with your finger. Whoever remains at home, his house shall be burned to the ground and the chief's wrath shall follow him and his family from parents to children, his kindred even to the most remote, and his friends. So shall punishment be measured out to anyone who remains at home this day!" When the champion presents himself, the chief says, "I have two riddles. If the right answers are given to them, I shall bake in the oven; if not, you will bake. These are the conditions." But the chief's crier has already advised the stranger, as follows: "'Come and stand before the people and when you see that the oven is hot enough, for I shall attend to the heat, give the answer to the first half. And when you see me lay the stones flat and throw some out to the edge, give the answer to the

²¹ Fornander, v, 128.

²² Fornander, iv, 314.

²³ Fornander, iv, 594.

second half. Then take hold of Kaikipaanea and throw him into the oven.' ”²⁴

In both cases in which the *hoopaapaa* contest is named, the contestant carries a calabash containing articles of which he is to make use in the *hoopaapaa* contest—articles, that is, by which he can make good an improbable boast or meet any attempt of his host to put him at a disadvantage. In neither case are these objects of a supernatural character. In the story of Kuapaka, however, it is the possession of the “wind-calabash” containing his grandmother’s bones which gives the hero advantage over his rivals. “It was a real calabash, entirely covered over with wicker-work, plaited like a basket, and it was named in honor of Pakaa’s mother. . . . This calabash was given the name of Laamaomao because during her life-time the winds obeyed her every call and command.”²⁵

The legendary woman from underseas, Hinaaimalama, carries the moon in her calabash.²⁶ The Rat-man, wishing to go concealed to Hawaii, bids a friend “. . . get some *ie* vines and make a basket in the shape of a calabash for me to hide in . . . and you can say that the basket is for the safe-keeping of your god.”²⁷

On the whole, however, the challenger is represented as depending upon his wits rather than upon miracle in stocking his calabash. When Kaipalaoa, “the *hoopaapaa* youngster,” arrives off Kauai, he passes the chief’s canoes loaded with fish. Offered a canoe-load, he refuses all but two, which he selects with care; and coming to the bone fence proceeds to set them up in place of the chief’s taboo signals, which he tears down as a sign of defiance. The point of the substitution lies in the fact that the fishes’

²⁴ Cf. the account given by Mr. Weeks of a witch-trial on the Lower Congo. The man who is tried as a sorcerer, if he is obnoxious to his judges, is made to name rapidly the trees from which six different twigs are taken, or the names of ants running on the ground in front of him or of the birds sailing past. If he fails, he is condemned as a wizard and will be killed. John H. Weeks, “Customs of the Lower Congo People,” *Folk-lore*, xix (1908), 417–418.

²⁵ Vol. v, 72.

²⁶ Vol. v, 267. “It was Hinaaimalama who turned the moon into vegetable food (*ai*) and the stars into fish (*ia*).”

²⁷ Vol. iv, 460.

names—"Twisted signal" and "Strong taboo"—are a challenge to competitive rank. There is some preliminary sparring. "The chief invites you to come up here, young bragger," calls the messenger. "The chief invites you to come down here, middle-aged bragger," retorts the boy. On his arrival at the door, the wits declare that he may stay outside. "Very good! then you must stay inside, never go out, rot there!" Again defeated, they invite him to enter, but take up all the floor-covering and throw down water. He good-humoredly confides to his calabash, "Say, you must sit down on the part of the floor that has a covering." Challenged to make his words good, he explains that the lower batton of the house is called the "bottom covering." The wits then proceed to make their section of the floor suitable for men of rank. They spread down fine grass, then mats from Niihau, and finally their handsomest bark-cloth. The calabash now comes into requisition. Puna, in the island of Hawaii, is noted for its fragrant plants. The stranger spreads out sweet grass, a mat woven of richly-perfumed pandanus blossoms, a scented bark-cloth dyed on both sides. When the chief's followers prepare a feast of roast pig and awa drink, he takes out a little wooden pig (probably of a kind used by priests in sacrifice), a bundle of sticks, a number of pebbles, and dramatizes a feast in miniature. When they place singers behind them to accompany their chants, he derides them by setting up a wooden mannikin to make the motions. In this way he successfully prevents his antagonists from putting him to shame at the outset of the debate.

At Lono's arrival at the court of the chief of Oahu,²⁸ a number of bets are engaged in between himself and his host, who attempts to catch him at his weakest point. In every case, in spite of the rashness of the venture, Lono outwits his host. The first bet is about a new name-chant which the chief has got from a lady-guest from Kauai. He has bidden each of his retainers to

²⁸ "The chief desire that urged Lono to make the journey (to Oahu) was that he might show his skill in his favorite profession of *hoopaapaa*. Hence he took with him his calabash known by the name of Kuwalawala. In this calabash, besides his clothes, he carried several of the things he used in the profession of *hoopaapaa*." Fornander, iv, 270.

commit a line as she recites the song and has then connected the lines one by one at his leisure until he has committed the whole. Unfortunately for him, the lady has omitted to mention that Lono, having enjoyed her favor for a night, has himself memorized the same chant in a single night, and is fully prepared to meet the chief's challenge. The next four contests take place on a fishing excursion, an art in which Lono is confessedly weak. Here magic saves the day for Lono. I am inclined to think that the story of the shark lured by Lono into sharkless waters; of his cutting up his old counsellor to provide hook, sinker, bait, and line; and of the fish from Puna with a wreath over its head, about which the first three bets concern themselves, are substituted for misunderstood puns, so at variance are they with the realistic spirit of the other contests. In the last bet, which concerns a racing contest back to port, Lono wins against overwhelming odds by slipping in by another route while his antagonist stops his rowers upon their oars to jeer at his expected defeat.²⁹ The final bet concerns the calabash which contains the bones of enemy warriors, each done up in its own bundle. Only a single one of Lono's counsellors can name each bundle, and he is supposed to be in Hawaii. His opponent knows this and ventures the bet. By good luck, the counsellor arrives just in time to save his master the stake, and Lono chants a jeering song at the expense of each dead warrior.

In all these examples, the wit-contest consists in making good a brag, or taking a dare, or answering jibe for jibe, or standing up against quizzing—in any of a number of quite useless competitive activities entered into merely for the fun of the thing, such as are common to any society in their moments of relaxation. The value of the stakes set, the prodigious odds against which the hero engages, these are the careless ways of chiefs; and sympathy for the winner is assured by pitting the adventurer against the arrogant chief who is surrounded by the advantages of his own court. But that which mainly supports the *hoopaapaa* contestant is his knowledge of words. Any boast may be made good by a successful pun.

²⁹ Compare Kuapakaa's defeat of his far superior rivals by placing his own canoe in the current caused by the eddy left behind the other, and thus riding triumphantly to shore unwearied. Fornander, v, 130.

For example, in the story of Pikoiaakaala, the Rat-man overcomes the champion rat-shooter of Oahu by wit in words. His antagonist shoots ten rats with a single arrow; he gets ten and a bat. "The bat must not be counted! It is not a rat!" cry the other's adherents. But by quoting an old saying

The bat in time of calm
Is your younger brother, O rat!

he claims the victory. Then he brags that he will hit a rat in the midst of a crowd. He shoots a dim-eyed old woman and wins the bet; for "When a baby is born he is called a *child*; when he grows bigger we call him a *youth*; when he stops growing he is a *full-grown man*; when he walks with a cane he is an *old man*; and when his eyes grow dim he is called *blear-eyed rat*. Then isn't she a rat?" Next he offers to shoot "a big rat sitting on the rafters," and hits the top batten. "That is not a rat!" "O yes, it is! It is called 'back of a rat,' as one says in house-building, 'Bind the cord to the back of the rat!'"³⁰

Hawaiian hero-tales contain instances of such witty retorts. Certain games cultivate the practice of wrapping a reproach or an insult under a form of words much like the old European lampooning by means of a "ballad." The *hula* songs especially preserve this art.³¹ But the formal riddling contest is described in full only in the story of Kaipalaoa.

The contest contains eighteen numbers. A list of their subjects may make the nature of the competition clearer:

1. Things that "turn over," *kuhuli*.
2. Things of value in a canoe, *ka waiwai nui a ka halau*.
3. An "animal with its bones outside and flesh inside."
4. "Cold places where the hands are likely to get cold."
5. A mountain shaped like an animal.
6. A round-shaped relish.
7. A play on the word "hidden," *nalo*.
8. A play on the word "hand," *lima*.

³⁰ In the second version of the story, some variations occur. A comparison of the two is valuable as a study in oral transmission.

³¹ See Nathaniel B. Emerson, "Unwritten Literature of Hawaii, the Sacred Songs of the Hula," Bulletin 38, Bureau of Am. Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 1909, pp. 69, 70, 98, 106, 211, et cetera. Cf. the legend of Halemano, Fornander, v, 244-258.

9. A "bird with its wings hanging down."
10. A "thing that creeps without roots or stem."
11. Uses of the word "cling," *pili*.
12. A certain wind.
13. A "lifeless thing that carries away the dead."
14. Uses of the *hau* wood.
15. Fruits down below (vegetables).
16. The islands of the group.
17. A play upon the words *ola* and *moku*.
18. The "joints" of the body.

The wits about the chief voice the challenge in formal terms of insult, accompanied by an invocation to the god. They say:

These are all the uses to which you can apply the word "turn" young man. If you can find more you shall live, but if you fail you shall surely die:

We will twist your nose
Till the sun looks crooked as at Kumakena!
We will poke out your eyes with our sticks here
And the god will suck up the water,
Our god of wrangling, Kaneulupo.

The boy takes up the word quickly:

Why can't I, though a lad, find a few more things that can be turned over? If I fail, you may live; but if I succeed, I will kill you all;

I will twist your noses
Till the sun looks crooked as at Kumakena!
I will poke out your eyes
And the god will suck up the water,—
My god, Kanepaiki.

Several different kinds of word-plays are involved in the riddling, but the trick always consists in finding another case like the one or more described in the challenge. Some of the tests are not what we would call "riddles" at all; they are merely lists of things to which the test is to add another. A second sort of test depends upon a mere change in the place-name, either with or without a punning significance. Place-names enter largely into all these tests. Eight out of the eighteen numbers involve their knowledge. The successful combatant must therefore be a well-traveled man, since not only the place itself but its particular character and associations enter into the competition. In the case of actual riddles—the "animal with its bones outside," the "rich round relish," the "bird with drooping wings," the

“bat created long ago by Hina”—in which simple objects are wrapped up in metaphorical images, the point of the contest does not seem to lie in guessing the riddle, the answers to which—the crab, the candle-nut, the dragon-fly, a bat-shaped mountain—are contained in the challenge. It is for the opponent to compose a similar riddle which will parallel the first as exactly as possible and present an equally striking analogy.³² Sometimes the test is not metaphorical; an object may have a characteristic so unique that it is hard to match it. Of such sort is the riddle of the *kaunooa* vine which

—creeps there above without roots,
It has no stem, its only stem is the wood it creeps on,

but the lad sees a charming analogy in the spider-web. The possible changes vary from the slight alteration involved in

My bird with its wings down, a dragon-fly,
For at sight of water its wings hang down,

which the lad answers with

My bird with its wings hanging down, *Kauniki*,
For at sight of a blade of grass its wings hang down,

to the figure of the animal-shaped mountain

Kauwiki, the mountain, the bat,
Created long ago by Hina,

matched by

Honuiki (little turtle) with its round head, washed by the sea.

Of the eighteen numbers of the contest, only five take any such liberties as the last with the phrasing, which is usually exactly reproduced with only such slight alteration as is necessary to turn the figure. Such performances require a very ready memory, as well as an active wit. The addition of a metaphor to a literal description, as in the riddle quoted above, or the introduction of a pun, scores for the contestant. Eight out of the eighteen

³² Cf. the African riddles gathered by M. Junod among the Ba-Ronga, where a somewhat similar matching process is employed. H. Junod, “Les Ba-ronga,” *Bulletin de la Société Neuchâteloise de Géographie*, x (1898), 252-263.

numbers contain a play on words, and in five cases the pun is introduced in the reply. The most intricate example of this is the enumeration of "things of value" in the canoe-shed and in the calabash. The challenge is to add anything of equal value to the three things named in the canoe-shed—the canoe itself, the out-rigger, and the lashing-beam. By punning upon other uses of the three words, the boy proves that exactly these three things are "things of value in a calabash."

The riddles are for the most part proposed as an unrelated series, but the last three are linked together by a play upon the words employed by the last speaker. The conclusion is left unfinished by Fornander, who says, "The contest continued until the boy won out at the word 'joint' (ki)." Curiously enough, the end is recovered, as I think, in a story of a riddling contest from Puna collected recently in Honolulu and sent me by Miss Laura Green.³³ As it is unpublished, with her permission I give it in full.

A certain chief living in Puna in the days of long ago, was obsessed with the desire of obtaining all the riddles possible. He therefore made it a habit to send out from time to time certain young men from his district to search out this commodity. These young men would go from place to place, and on their return give to the chief the fruits of their research. After they had finished their recital of fresh riddles, the chief would invariably spring this one upon them: "Mo-ke-ki a mo-ke-ki!" This caused astonishment and consternation, for they had never before heard such words. For failure to answer, the chief commanded his soldiers to kill them.

He continued this custom for such a long period that but few youths of the district were left alive. One day he called before him a certain young man and commissioned him to make a circuit of the island of Hawaii in order to gather new riddles. Forthwith, the youth started, going up on the first stage of his journey into the district of *Olaa*. There he saw an aged couple cultivating their land. He called out "Aloha!" and they responded with the same salutation. The old man inquired, "What brings you on this journey?" The young man answered, "I am seeking proverbs for the chief."

"Alas! how pitiful!" exclaimed the old woman. "I fear that in the morning of your life your sun will set! But tell us plainly the kind of proverb you are seeking; for never before have I seen such sadness depicted in a youthful face! It is for us to be sad, for our sun will soon set."

The young man quickly replied, "Mo-ke-ki a mo-ke-ki!"

Now the Hawaiians say that this old man had once served as court jester and inventor of riddles for the Puna chief's father and grandfather.

³³ The Hawaiian informant asserts that although his is an old Puna story and resembles Fornander's, it is "not the same story."

He knew that what the chief was probing for as an answer to his riddle was some words representing parts of the human body with the syllable *ki* in them. So the old couple laughed, and the man said, "Yes, and this is the answer to your riddle: 'Ki-hi-poo-hi-wi' (angles of the shoulders) and 'ki-hi-poo' (angles of the head). When your chief springs this favorite riddle of his upon you, answer by giving the same to him!"

Thanking them, the young man continued his journey around the island. On his return, he showed to his chief all the proverbs he had gathered. After he had finished, the chief as usual gave his favorite riddle "Mo-ke-ki a mo-ke-ki!"

The young man answered the chief as he had been advised by his Olaa friend, then challenged him with the same riddle, "Mo-ke-ki a mo-ke-ki!"

"Ah! you live!" exclaimed the chief. "And where did you get this riddle? If you can answer it, my head is yours!"

The youth, smiling, replied, "Mi-ki au," at the same time holding up both hands, palms inward that the chief might see the finger-nails (*mi-ki au*). He immediately fell upon the chief and beat him to death without the interference of the soldiers standing near, for they had heard what the chief said.

Thus ended the foolish search for riddles by the chiefs of Puna.³⁴

If we compare this modern folk-tale with the two older Fornander versions contained in *Kipakailiuli* and in *Kaipalaoa*, for whose common source we have already argued, we shall find exactly those variations which we should expect to find in a later age. Both contestants belong to Puna, the link having been forgotten which sent heroes in more ancient times on adventures between the islands of Kauai and the district of Puna on Hawaii. There is no mention of the "oven," and, as in the episodic story, it is the chief himself rather than his disputers who suffers death. Like the episodic version, too, the riddle is not guessed but won from an old servant of the chief. Here it is by luck; in the earlier version the hero sets about the task of winning the man's confidence by kind treatment. Both lack the motive of blood-revenge which gives moral force to the more elaborate account of the

³⁴ Miss Green writes: "Certain families in Puna, Hawaii, will on request give you a riddle, but refuse the answer; the reason being that they are descendants of those men who made unsuccessful attempts to answer the chief's riddle of '*mo ke ki a mo ke ki*' and perished by being baked in an oven. Their bones were stripped of the flesh (which was not eaten) and then converted into a fence around the chief's palace. If their descendants are urged to give the answer their reply will be '*Ka mea keia i holehole ia e ka iwi o na kupuna*,' For this the bones of our ancestors were stripped."

hoopaapaa contest in *Kaipalaoa* and both lack the actual display of wit in repartee which belongs to the finished tale. But Miss Green's version contributes just that turn to the conclusion which is missing in the elaborated tale dictated to Judge Fornander. Putting the two together, the three linked riddles run as follows. The wits have named thirteen islands of the group and challenge the hero to name another. He thinks of *Moku-ola*, Isle-of-life, an islet off the coast of Hilo. Catching up the word "life" (*ola*) they rejoin

Break a tooth and live (*Hai ka niho la ola*)

He answers with a pun upon the word *moku*, which as a verb signifies "to cut," and says,

Cut the joint and die (*Moku ke ki la make*)

The answer is an enumeration of the "joints" of the body, as in Miss Green's version, and the concluding challenge must be that of the "finger-nails" (*mi-ki au*) according to her informant. In the Fornander version, the test depends upon adding another "joint"; in Miss Green's version, it is the contestant who is challenged to name the "joints" of the body.

A study of the practise of the *hoopaapaa* in Hawaii and especially of the wit in riddling which it develops, suggests that the riddling of today is a much simpler and more childish matter than in those days when it was practised by chiefs or employed by the specially gifted to acquire fortune. Evidently much is yet to be learned about the rules of the genuine old Hawaiian riddles, for examples of which we should no doubt turn to the old chants and *hula* songs of Hawaii.

It is likely that puzzling metaphor and pun became the fashion during a special period of Hawaiian history—that period which was dominated by the brilliant group of traditional island chiefs who appear in this set of stories and which is said to represent the high water mark of Hawaiian intellectual energy.³⁵ Its taste dominated later art. The simplicity of the archaic style was probably

³⁵ See Fornander: *An Account of the Polynesian Race, its Origin and Migrations*, London, 1880, vol. II, 32.

vitiated by the riddling tendency, and the result is an incoherent elaboration of riddles which even in the noblest of the later chants of Hawaii remain unintelligible to the Hawaiians themselves. Scandinavian and Irish native art met the same fate, and probably through a similar domination of wit over the imagination among an aristocratic circle closed to the uninitiated.

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